852 unbaptized during this period of ritual impurity.

852 304 Another Old Testament survival, which is considered more customary than religious, is circumsision. Boys are circumcised about a week after birth, but not usually on Wednesday or Friday fast days. In some regions, notably Gojjam, girl babies undergo clitorectomy, performed by a woman in a strictly female gathering, so that the girl will not become a "selfish" wife, and will be happy in marriage. After these operations, the babies may be blessed by a priest. However, when an adult person becomes Christian, circumcision or clitoredtomy are not performed, since they are not required.

293 852 553 At baptism, the baby receives the blue neck-cord, the "mätäb", which forever after distinguishes him from a Muslim. The priest gives or confirms the Christian name of the child, usually one that places the child under the protection and guidance of a saint or archangel, such as "Gäbre-Mikaël" (Servant of Michael). However, in later life, most children will use and be called by the "world name" given them by their mothers at time of birth, such as "Taamrat" (miracle, e.g if the husband suddenly returned from a distant and dangerous trip at the time) for a boy, or "almaz" (diamond) or other sparkling name for a girl. The Christian name may be used later in life if the person becomes a priest or monk or nun, or participates in "qurban" (eucharistic marriage in church).

608 852 Every baby baptized, also every new adult convert, is given godparents. When a slave was baptised (prior

608 852 to the abolition of 1942), the godparents usually obtained his freedom. The relationship is one of artificial kinship. To symbolize this literally, the godfather and godmother clasp the right thumb of the baby and swear by the Trinity that they will not distinguish between their own children and the godchild.

783 At first baptism, baby or adult, the entire body is immersed or bathed in holy water. Every year, on the festival of "Ṭämqät" (Epiphany), the sprinkling of the crowd with baptismal water is considered re-baptism, to wash away any breach with Christianity during the year. A woman who has had sexual intercourse with a Muslim must undergo complete baptism, otherwise the neighbors and the church will ostracize her. A person severely ill and considered possessed by demons is rebaptized.

872 At five, boys and girls begin useful functions in the family economy, and therefore boys are often 10 years old before they begin to go to church school. This schooling takes place under the shady cypress trees in the churchyard, under the direction of a young priest or däbtära. The method is rote learning of Geez and Amharic reading, and liturgy, beginning with the Gospel of St. John: "mälaktä yohanesä hawareya". Usually neither translation from the Geez liturgical language nor writing are taught. Graduates of this 3-year school qualify to serve as deacons. In recent years, they may then enter the 3rd grade of a government elementary school. Even church students now use the one-page printed "fidäl" (alphabet) in Geez-Amharic script, which, in addition,

575 esses or belong to prestige families. Women members
608 are considered "sisters" of the fraternity, and men "brothers". This establishes an artificial kinship relation which is taken very literally by the more pious. Therefore, a husband and wife never belong to the same
582 mahabbar. Among the more pious, a member may not marry the widow of a mahabbar "brother", for this would be "levirate" which is expressly prohibited by the church as a prechristian custom.

575 428 According to traditional law, the mäḥabbär inherits any property left by a deceased member who leaves no blood kin (consanguinal) , in preferance to any rela-
426 476 tives he might have by marriage (affinal). The mahabbar acts as a mutual aid society for its members, as banker, making loans to members in financial need by raising internal subscriptions, and will even pay for the "tazkar" memorial feast 40 days after a member's death if his
608 family cannot afford to do it properly. Family and personal problems of all kinds are discussed among "brothers" and "sisters", thus crossing the usual kinship
584 lines of confidence and trust. Marriage arrangements between extended families having eligible youngsters are often first informally broached by women "sisters", who then agree to ask their husbands to act as intermediaries.

575 561 When children reach the "age of reason" (boys above 7 years of age) they may be accepted into a kind of junior mäḥabbär by older boys; girls above 10 years of age into junior sororities of older girls. When a

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C. Artificial Kinship.

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In view of the emphasis of seeking security in the kinship relation, it is not surprising that Amhara society has formalized several ways of establishing artificial kinship, a process called "z̈amad hon̈a".

Adoption is permitted, regulated, mediated, and even encouraged by the church, provided the person or child to be adopted is both Abyssinian Christian, and "aṭṭenṭam" (lit. of good bones; ie. not a negroid Shanqalla or some other foreign race).

There are two degrees of adoption: "breast-parenthood", the complete adoption; and "bread-parenthood" by step-parents.

Full adoption provides a "breast-father" (ÿaṭuṭ abbat), or a "breast-mother" ("ÿaṭuṭ ennat"), or both. In the traditional, provincial, public ceremony of adoption, this expression was literally enacted. In the presence of the elders of the kin group, the Confessor, and the ċheqa shum, the new parent (male or female) coated his or her nipples with honey and simulated breast-feeding, even if the child was already in adolescence. The adoptee was then referred to as "ÿaṭuṭ lej" (lit. breast child). At the ceremony the new parents swear to make no distinction in treatment between the adopted and the consanguinal children; and the adoptee, if old enough "for reason" (about ages 7 to ten and over), swears to obey his new parents, tend them in sickness, and bury them as would a son.

Reasons forthe adoption of a "breast-child" may

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608 be the "mother's" barrenness, or a man's wish to be
597 taken care of in his old age, or both. Obversely, an adolescent orphan may himself take the initiative in selecting a prospective breast-parent, attaching himself to him, ingratiating himself with gifts of honey, etc. After adoption, the "breast-child" is literally considered like a blood relative, and may not marry his new "sibling" -by-adoption.

This prohibition does not apply to the "bread-parent" relation. A bread-father ("anjära abbat"), and bread-mother ("enjära ennat") are considered not truly "artificial kinship" of permanence. It is a step-parent relationship, arising out of divorce and remarriage of parents, or a man's last will asking a close friend tottake care of his children, in war or famine, or sickness. Youngsters do not often take the initiative to establish this relationship, for it does not usually provide the security of the breast-parenthood. The proverb says:

[539] "Bread-mother, what will move you?
(you are tough) like a gut!".

608 Another, mild, form of artificial kinship is established to give security and guarantee against ill-treatment to the bride, in the persons of the "mizë", two kinsmen of the groom who take an oath to regard and protect her like a sister in her new residential hamlet.

In the broadest sense, kinfolk also includes the retainer, usually a landless peasant, who has pla-

●608 ced himself under the protection of a landowning kin group, and injuries inflicted on him thereupon can lead to a blood feud as much as if he were a consanguinal relative.

All these attempts to establish artificial kinship are motivated by the attitude that kinship, even at geographical distance, is greater security than close relations with neighbors even of the same district. The proverb says:

[539] "Your (home) country, where is it?
(It is) Mary's water. (i.e. the womb).
You are my kinfolk!"

8. Attitudes based on Social Stratification

56 Social stratification among the Amhara, as has been shown, is based on land tenure and feudal relations between nobles and peasants; on the temporal as well as spiritual power of the Coptic Abyssinian church; on the ethnic division of skilled labor; on the conquest of border areas and the past subjugation of other ethnic and racial groups; to a lesser degree on age and sex.

565 184 Analysis of the human relations and attitudes arising out of this social stratification can be expressed in terms of class; sometimes approaching caste, because very little social mobility has been "open" to ethnic specialists in skilled labor and to

582 his late 'teens. The difference in what is considered "suitable age" is thus five or more years, for the girl may be as young as 13 or 14 in the still prevailing (though officially now outlawed) tradition. The reason is not only the earlier maturing of the girl, but partly the emphasis of protecting her virginity until marriage, partly the attitude that the groom must "tame" his bride - and the younger the better.

597 608 Consanguinal ties continue stronger, after marriage, than conjugal ties. The "artificial kinship" created at this period of the life cycle is that of the bride's "best man" ("mizē") who is sworn to protect her even against her husband, and who is in a good position to do so as a residential kinsman of the husband. This emphasis on consanguinal ties even after marriage is similar to other parts of the Middle East (footnote 80), and also Africa.

885 A fully adult man ("säw") and woman ("sȳt") are honorifically addressed, e.g. in church usage, as "acmä adam" for man (from Geez "Adam"), "acmä hawwa" for woman (from Geez for "Eve"), and the connotation is that they have passed the hot-blooded "gobäz" and "qonje" stage and have become reasonable, calm, responsible persons who know the etiquette of their culture and have become fully cognizant of proper behavior at all forseeable events in the life cycle.

583 585 A. Marriage Patterns

There are three predominant types of marriage:

Footnote 80: Patai, Raphael: Relationship Patterns among the Arabs. Middle Eastern Affairs, Vol. 2, May 1951, pp. 180-5

584 tiations are concluded, preparations are made to ensure the spiritual and emotional well-being of the couple. A bridegroom is warned to study the character of his prospective mother-in-law, for it is believed that her daughter will take after her:

"Observe her mother,
before you let the daughter enter (the house)."

584 608 But the importance of the sworn best men, the "mizē", in protecting the bride after the marriage, is considered even more important, due to the patrilocal residence. They are called the protectors of her "teeth and arms", ready to rush to her aid even against the husband when she shouts for help. On the other hand, to balance the situation, they are chosen from among the groom's closest relatives, e.g. first cousins (patrilineal), so that they won't be likely to seduce the girl. The two "mize" have to take the vow of excommunication before the "mänfas qubē" (lit. soul counsel) priest, in front of the parents of the girl and the groom, that they will regard her as a sister, that they will treat her as their own sisters, that they will come night or day when she calls. This formal, literal bond of artificial kinship is strong, and the bride affectionately addresses the "mize" as "gashey" (lit. my shield, i.e. by protector) much as she would an uncle or other grown kinsman. The proverb says:

539 "For confession - go to the priest,
for (selfless) love - go to the mize".

These "mize" become protectors not only of the bride, but, in consequence, of the marriage of the couple. For, if the groom needs a "wāš", a personal guarantor-bondsman for employment or if in legal trouble, the mize can hardly refuse this service as they are now doubly bound. The mize pattern thus increases security and stability

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608 for all concerned, and is reinforced by the public social sanction given the "swearing - in".

b) "Semanya" Wedding Procedure

585 The wedding consists largely of a formal recapitulation of all the negotiations in public, by the two kingroups involved, sometimes at considerable length, confirmed in a monosyllabic expression from bride and groom. The other major activities are feasting in both hamlets involved, a re-enactment of bride capture at nightfall, and the signs of virginity signifying that the "fortress is just taken".

The preferred day for weddings is Sunday, so that the deflowering, taking place after nightfall which is considered part of Monday, will not take place on the Lord's day. (footnote 82). For the same reason, weddings do not take place on Saturday; nor in lent, a period of mourning; nor on Wednesday or Friday fast days.

Preparations for feasting and gathering are made at both hamlets involved. At both places a "dass" shelter is erected on a square staked out with tall saplings, covered with leafy branches against the sun, with fragrant grasses on the ground. Relatives are invited, but strangers are kept away for fear of the evil eye.

The wedding guests among peasants begin to arrive about noon, Sunday, and are received, at the hamlet of the groom, under the men's "dass". The women occupy a neighboring "dass", busily cooking the meat sauce "wot". The groom remains inside a hut and does not appear until shortly before he has to leave for the hamlet of the

Footnote 82: Sunday is also wedding day of Christians of Lebanon. See - Feghali, Michel: La Famille Catholique au Liban. REVP, 6, pp. 291-308, Paris, 1925.

888 792 young, "not-yet-serious" young woman, partly because there is no career involved, as there is in case of young men who become monks. Though there are usually fewer widows then widowers (due to the mortality in connection with childbirth), the lot of a widow is not a happy one. The proverb says:

[539] "How that my fortune (husband) has died,
what will my mother-in-law give me?"

888 736 [792] Without the kin group, an aging man, especially if sick, blind or crippled, has little protection. The church is not eager to have him as a monk, for it can recruit younger men for its service, as a career, and an old man is much less useful in the churchyard than an old woman. He may, especially if landless, or in town, be reduced to beggary. There he sits at the approaches to the churches, repeating his demanding, ceaseless litany: "Sela Medhane Alam, sela Maryam, sela Giyorgis" (For sake of the Savior, of Mary, of St. George), stretching out an open hand. Sometimes he may send out a child to beg for him, either because he is too bashful, or is using it as a technique. Little boys will thus attach themselves to a potential donor, repeating "babba, babba" (babytalk for "daddy"). [508] They have already learned the concept of artificial kinship to establish human relationships.

6. The End of Life: Eulogy; Memorial Services and Feasts.

763 When an elder is close to death, other elders from among his nearest kin come with his confessor, and say to him: "Confess yourself". When he has done so, they ask him for his last will: "What do you give to your children, and for your soul (i.e. to the church, through the confessor, to the poor)". While fields and cattle are given to the descendants, (the former only in patrilineal descent), personal belongings such as oxhide mats, shamma

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"ellel" as shrilly as they do outside church during Coptic services. Exhausted, the powerful woman finally collapsed, and the curtain was quickly drawn to hide her during her recovery.

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Several other zar doctors demonstrated their individual "fukkara" activities. But more and more participants grew inattentive, and some began to doze. Lady Salämtew declared the session ended at about

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3 A.M. The women bedded down right on the floor or the mud bench, while the men who lived nearby went home, and others rolled up in blankets and skins just outside the house, under the overhanging roof. It was a cold night, usual during cloudless month of Yäkatit.

The season of the roaming zar spirits had once again been concluded, not to revive in full vigor until after the rainy season half a year later. At the convention much protection had been gained, and old protection reinforced against the many mischievous zars that might plague people in the meantime.

d) Social Aspects of the Zar Cult.

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The groups of chronically possessed persons who meet regularly as devotees of the zars, in the "wädaja" (lit. love feast), constitute what are called "aqwädash" (sometimes "aqtacha"), face-to-face societies. Their interpersonal relationships soon become social, much like the mähabbär communal worship society of the church. Both establish bonds which, to the Amhara mind, become "artificial kinship". Not infrequently this leads to the establishment of bonds of actual affinal kinship (as described earlier).

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The parallel can also be applied to an understanding of the leadership involved. Much like the mähabbär is led and blessed by the priest-confessor, so the zar society is led and blessed by the

304 the names of saints. The client generally selects designs within the range appropriate to his needs, and women favor aesthetically attractive patterns. Only the gums are undecorated with designs, but are completely blackened; even here, however, the tattooing is regarded [551] as aesthetically pleasing. Men sometimes have their [608] godfather's names as well as their own (which incorpor- [741] ates the patronym) tattooed on their wrists, so that should they die in some foreign place, the local priests will regognize them as Christians and give them a proper burial.

Table 5 outlines the tokwariy's practice.